

## ‘The Candle-lit Demonstration’ as a Social Drama: The Dynamics of Civil Disobedience in Korea\*

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*This paper is an analysis of the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 in South Korea as a ‘social drama’. The demonstration participants each have different, individual reasons for joining the cause, yet those reasons can all be attributed to the unrestrained competition imposed by a capitalist society. The South Korean government’s decision to import American beef became an event through which the participants expressed their discontent. Prior to participating in these demonstrations, many people did not feel the need for solidarity with others to any great extent. However, with new boundaries forming between people and societal discord simultaneously resulting from greatly increased pressure, people became concerned with the meaning and possibility of solidarity.*

*The collapse of these borders started with questions about in the state of science, heretofore assumed to be precise and neutral. This is because scientific reasoning was the foundation for the government’s argument that the importation of American beef was for the public good. In the many debates surrounding the issue of the importation of American beef, both sides used scientific figures to prove their cases. In order words, this demonstration case illustrates how scientific arguments can be analyzed, interpreted, and provided different arguments by individuals whose political ideologies are different.*

*As the demonstrations grew, the police began to use a violent measure to suppression them. Confronting the violence, people ridiculed the authority with wit and humor. This was made possible by the mutual sympathy and like-mindedness of the participants, who in ‘separation between street and side-walk’ determined by established society, crossed various social, gender, and age-related boundaries together. In reality though, the forces tying the protestors were always in flux. In a few situations, the line between the conservative and the progressive became unclear, and that between violence and non-violence also changed. At that stage, a rough internal order was created. The birth of that order represented a return to the usual unity.*

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\* Translated From the published article in the *Korean Cultural Anthropology* 42(1): 179-220, 2009 with permission from Korean Society for Cultural Anthropology.

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*New possibilities emerged as these people, who while opposing to the government, crossed barriers together, began to return to 'normalcy' through their own individual capacities. The people realized that the authority they had trusted, and which in the past had protected them in the public arena was by no means a guaranteed thing. Also understanding that they themselves could be victims of this power regime, the peoples' response manifested itself within their neighborhoods in a variety of different forms. Efforts to return to normal, and routine daily life were started, as well as those to foster new regional solidarity and new consumer rights movements. A 'conscious momentum' was formed whereby politicians seeking solidarity among neighbor citizens saw an ideal in how large-scale politics utilized mass media.*

*The final results of the social drama are not important. What is matter is the process by which individuals, through the experiences of the collective actions, realize their individual identity and meaning of life. Therefore, the experience of participating in the 2008 candlelight demonstrations, which had no organized leadership, set the groundwork for calling into question the division between everyday life and politics in Korean society.*

*Keywords: 'the candle-lit demonstration', social drama, civil society, solidarity, the safety issue of U.S. beef imports, public benefit, science discourse, humor, Korea*

## I. INTRODUCTION: GETTING INTO IT

Following the news of the American beef importation agreement in April 2008, insofar as the vast majority of Korean society had a lot to say on the issue, the entire country was in a stir with the problem. From individuals' private conversations, to television, the Internet and newspapers, Korea was inundated with dialogues regarding the importation of American beef. Within a month, people started to march in Seoul's Ch'onggye Square against the government decision to import American beef and the candlelight demonstration began. As the people began to experience violent pressure from the police they had believed would protect them, their perspectives gradually changed. The movement started creating new groups, which would meet in their respective communities in every evening, or the weekends. In the summer of 2008, these candlelight demonstrations were the greatest and most hotly debated topic of conversation in Korean society.

In the myriad of discussions about the demonstrations, the most hotly debated aspect was whether or not 'a leadership group' within the movement

existed, and what its existence might mean.<sup>1</sup> Since the beginning of President Lee Myung-Bak's administration in 2008, there were groups that continually called for his resignation, like Internet cafes that posted notices opposing the importation of American beef, and the Citizen's Committee for Countermeasures on Mad-Cow Disease (광우병 국민대책위원회). However this Committee, which has put itself forth as representative of the leadership of the movement, was hastily created among people from various citizens' groups in order to lend support to the ongoing candlelight demonstrations. Unlike the previous demonstrations and meetings, the formation of this committee can be portrayed as something that grew out of the candlelight demonstrations, not necessarily under specific leadership or organization. In addition the sheer fact that there were debates on the existence of leadership in the candlelight demonstration between the pro and con of the demonstration show that the 2008 candlelight demonstration was fundamentally different from the prior demonstrations. Many attempts were made to analyze the "fundamental difference" of the candlelight demonstrations; some of the most popular analysis varied from mentioning G. Deleuze and the desire of individuals to free them from the ruling power, to analysis borrowing A. Negri's *autonomia* to depict individuals' networked resistances. In response to the social reactions shown on the Internet, many new concepts and ideas, such as "multiplex," "collective intelligence," and "Web 2.0," sprouted. Severe evaluations on the demonstration were more prevalent online, fueled by analysis on analysis, new concepts, and various criticisms.

I visited Ch'onggye Square on the night of May 17 2008 for the first time; by the time, the candlelight demonstrations were coming to an end for the day. After seeing and meeting many people there, the candlelight demonstration became a 'must-be-at scene' for me, a part of my daily routine, for the next

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<sup>1</sup> Debates on whether there was a leadership or not were present not only on Daum Agora, but also on TV debate shows (such as MBC's 100 Minutes Debates of June 26 and July 3 2008). The argument for the existence of leadership of the candlelight demonstration is in parallel to the government's argument; the evidence that supports this claim is the fact that the government posted some key people of the demonstration as the "most wanted." This paper seeks to focus on how the participants of the demonstration interacted with each other, not much so on the issue of the existence of leadership.

four months. The demonstration has become more of a personal experience and fights, as well as a subject of analysis. Until August, I communicated and shouted with the people, holding out picket signs, marching with people from all over Seoul. As time went by, the variability of the gravity of candlelight demonstration transformed into something more than just a political experience. My conviction to record other demonstrations, visages of people, organization and execution of demonstrations, only grew as my experiences became more enriched. Experience at the scene is clearly a different task from recording the scene; recording is a work of saving the scene in my space. Recording and analyzing<sup>2</sup> are tasks, which entail a high possibility of being distant from the concerned participants of the demonstration who change over the course of the demonstration. This writing, as well, may solidify the dynamic and multiplicity of the scene. Nevertheless, I write because I believe in the potential of the written language.<sup>3</sup> Written experiences of the scene came from my own experiences, and the interviews were conducted via appointments with demonstrators after the demonstrations. This was beyond ordinary information collection; rather, it was a task that combined the evaluation and self-reflections of the participants and my experiences of the demonstration.

This article intends to understand candlelight demonstration within the boundaries of Victor Turner's social drama.<sup>4</sup> The details of the reasons behind the application of social drama theory in analyzing the demonstration will be addressed in detail in the main body of the paper, but to briefly mention here, one must realize that the experiences of candlelight demonstration

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<sup>2</sup> "Candlelight: Records of 65 Days," by Taskforce team for Candle-lit Demonstration in Kyunghyang Newspaper, which compiled newspaper articles, and the "Republic of Korea Common Sense Encyclopedia, Agora," which compiled countless posts on the internet and magazines, were published. "Candlelight is Democracy," which was a compilation of intelligentsia writings on candlelight demonstration was published in August, while the candlelight was still bright. In September, the 55<sup>th</sup> edition of the "Literature Science" was published also.

<sup>3</sup> Acted speech or experiences and recorded words can generate new ideas as they are read by different individuals. I am sure that those who read this paper will broaden their perspectives on the candlelight demonstrations. My thoughts borrow much from Walter J. Ong's "Orality and Literacy."

<sup>4</sup> Social Drama will be explained later with stories from the scenes of the demonstrations.

originates from different desires of each individual participants. Legitimizing and putting meanings to the demonstration is also very personal. There is no way that the demonstrators are conscientized and collectivized from the first place. However, over time, participants come to worry over the group-social identity. Such identity develops as boundaries form and become firm, and this includes concerning over either arbitrariness or uncertainty of the boundaries.<sup>5</sup> A candlelight demonstration is a collectivized movement that cannot be individually revived as a fragmentized movement, or as a group action with a specific aim. Experiences in which individuals suddenly feel the purpose of the group and returning to their daily lives can be taken as a social drama, and from there many things can be explained. In this paper, I try not to discuss neoliberalism or other major theories as much as possible, because of the belief that there lies a gap between the participants' feelings and the logics of science.<sup>6</sup> The Purpose of this paper is to engage in thinking about the meaning of the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 in South Korea as the fierceness of the experience of, rather than to seek for a logic behind that.

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<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that the people who chose the '1+5 Agenda' also show the social dynamic of boundaries. The '1+5 Agenda' refers to the direction of the candlelight demonstrations since their beginning, as discussed on the internet and also among the civil societies. It is the direction that centers around the issue of beef to also oppose education liberalization, the Great Canal Construction, privatization of public companies, privatization of the capital, and amendment of broadcasting laws. There was a big controversy surrounding the issue of extending the agenda. However, in reality, there were already picket signs opposing education liberalization and mad cow imports, starting on May 2.

<sup>6</sup> Kang, Nae-Hee (2008: 75) also mentions the disparity between 'against neoliberalism' slogans and the actual demonstration site, however, his idea of disparity differs slightly from that of author's. Kang believes that more people are prone to oppose neoliberalism after watching the demonstrations who accept the '1+5 Agenda,' despite the fact that the people themselves do not have a clear understanding of what neoliberalism is. I do not think that the demonstrators fully acknowledge the '1+5 Agenda,' however. This issue will be discussed further in the later part of the paper.

## II. PUBLIC INTEREST AND SCIENCE

Before a full discussion of the subject, it is necessary to address an important issue surrounding the candlelight demonstrations; it is the issue of the public interest. It is not easy to define the term in part because the word ‘public interest’ has been widely and confusingly used. Nonetheless, it is generally conceived that the public interest is an important issue for any social being. Generally, most of policies drafted by the government aims to enhance the public interest, and often times, opposing arguments on such policies may rise. Sometimes, conflicts may inflict over the issue of policy and the public interest. It is also common to see instances in which both sides of the conflicts argue for the public interest. For example, frustration over economic gain through development and the environmental damages entailing it is a typical public interest debate. In such a debate, both sides propose scientific data and evidences to support their arguments. If that would be the case, is it not possible to think that science is not an absolute truth or good? Is it possible that science can carry completely different meanings depending on socio-cultural interpretations? The debate part of the demonstration is also linked to the issue of who contributes to the public interest through the demonstration. The imaginations and open perspectives on the public interest and determining standards for public good are very important issue for further discussions.

On April 18, 2008, there was an announcement that the Korea-US beef import negotiations were settled. Despite formation of an atmosphere against the contents of the negotiation, President Lee Myung-Bak told the press that “city workers can finally eat good-quality meat for cheaper price,” implying that the negotiation was for the public interest. The Lee Administration continued to tell the public that American beef is safe, with scientific evidences from the OIE (Office International des Epizooties), that beef, 30 months or younger has no possibility of carrying mad-cow-disease. The fact that OIE does not place the US as a mad-cow-disease epidemic region also became an important scientific evidence for the Lee Administration’s decision. It is an argument that, regardless of how old the cow is, importing American beef in which the SRM (Specific Risk Material) was eliminated was

in the public interest, and public safety was guaranteed by scientific measures.

The Lee Administration's argument generated many heated debates over the issue of American beef import.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, both sides of the debate backed their arguments with papers and data from numerous internationally renowned, major scholarly journals and various international organizations. The problem was that every one of those papers and their respective showed different conclusions and arguments. The only item in common between the different sides' evidence was that, some mutated prion, which differs from the regular ones in the brains of mammals, exists and that the mutated prion irregularly mutates the proteins around it to cause an incurable degenerative neurological disorder that ultimately leads to death.

Within the controversy surrounding the mutate prion, the rumor that Koreans are more vulnerable to the mutated prions because 95% of Koreans carry an MM gene, spread quickly. The combined rumor of mutated prions and the MM gene ultimately led to the creation of a major scenario utilized by the party against US beef imports. The scenario goes along the lines of, "because mutated prions on the tools used in the butchering process cannot be killed through usual processes of sterilization, it is transmitted from cattle to cattle during the butchering process. The people who consume the contaminated beef will live without knowing that they are sick, and continue to naturally transmit mutate prions to others as they interact with each other. Also, mutated prions can be spread through various foods, processed foods, and even through cosmetic products. And because Korean people have MM genes, which are fatally vulnerable to mad-cow disease, in case they are transmitted with the mutate prions, 95% of the time, they will get sick."<sup>8</sup> This story spread quickly via the Internet and text messages. The conservative press argued that the story was a rumor by featuring articles and interviews

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<sup>7</sup> Since the end of April of 2008, an overload of discussions on the issues began to appear on the bulletin boards of many internet portal sites which in fact had no realistic connections to the issue; those internet portal sites mainly dealt with topics, such as, fashion, sports, music and women's issues.

<sup>8</sup> This borrows heavily from April and May posts from Daum Agora (<http://agora.media.daum.net/>). The posts on Daum Agora were even compiled into an encyclopedia called "Republic of Korea Common Sense Encyclopedia, Agora." This anecdote is the author's paraphrasing of the posts on Daum Agora.

of professionals against such an argument. However, it was found that the same presses had covered stories about the dangers of importing 20 months plus beef due to the MM genes, only a few months back. This was the work of concerned netizens who dug up the past articles of the conservative press. In reality, truth in this controversy cannot be simply ignored. It is important to observe how people face and contextualize danger or threats.

The context of the danger floating around the Internet can be revisited through the preface in a Korean version of “Purity and Danger” by Mary Douglas. Douglas discusses the generational changes that have taken place over the last 30 years. First, she argues that the period after 1950s, the period of which she began her studies for the book, was a period in which science analyzed and explained everything. That is, people from that time were confident that appropriate scientific tests and methods could recognize danger and threats. Therefore, she criticized those who rejected her work and recommendation, which urged people to rethink the principles of the scientific methods. Douglas claims that now, when at least 30 years have passed since the publication of her work,<sup>9</sup> is when people began to refer to “science and technology as the root of all dangers and threats,” or that “obscurity is always hidden.” This is why she points out “there are always ways to read evidence the correct way.” The question of which content that science decides to include or not is, of course, a problem of truth, but simultaneously, the decision is ultimately up to the community, made possible by science and technology (Douglas 1997: 12-16).<sup>9</sup>

Mary Douglas’ criticism provides a perspective when reviewing the scientific knowledge used as evidence in the public interest in the midst of the fierce 2008 disputes in Korea, as the application and explanation of science, said to be objective and neutral, are ultimately dependent on how one wishes to perceive one’s society. Depending on the individual’s context, scientific data or findings can be a lie while being the truth, or can be truth while being a lie. Through the American beef import conflict, in which science was asserted as

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<sup>9</sup> Mary Douglas’ *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* was first published in 1996. Yu Je-Bun and Lee Hun-Sang translated it in 1997. In the translated copy, Douglas reminds the audience the meaning of her own theory in the context of the generation that changed from modern to post-modern.



the key component of the conflict, the Korean people learned the lesson of variable interpretation – this not only includes the interpretation of science, but also philosophy, and history.

Other researchers (Kwon et al. 2008) attempted to view the candlelight demonstrations and the attitudes of the responding government as an indicator of democracy in Korea. Personally, however, I agree with Mary Douglas in the sense that, due to the variable interpretation of scientific data, opening the door for various interpretation of a single event is the true first step towards achieving democracy. It is natural for scientific data to triumph over its opponent. However, if the possibility arises of the opposing argument being completely denied, then it is an unscientific, anti-public interest idea that denies democracy.

### III. CONTEXT OF DANGER AND THE EXPLOSION OF THE RAGE

The rage on the internet after the US beef imports negotiation stemmed not only from the sheer fear of mad-cow disease, but also from the fact that the government treated the fear as if it was non-existent from their scientific data. Despite the conflict between the various sets of scientific data, the common findings – that mad-cow disease has a long dormant period, and that it is impossible to cure – were transformed it into a serious threat for many people. That was because mad-cow disease is not a preventable disease; there are no vaccines for it, and paying close attention to personal hygiene is not going to prevent it. Also, studying it and preparing for it is not going to help people avoid the danger of the disease neither. Not consuming American beef may be a way to prevent it, but that scenario was unrealistic because no one could tell where the beef came from and how old was looking at a red piece of meat. The threat of mad-cow disease arising from importing the US beef was a completely new threat that the Korean people had never experienced before; in reality, this was a highly modernized societal threat that no one could realistically do anything about, no matter how much worrying is done.

For the people who felt the US beef imports as a threat, the government's position at the negotiation table to import 30 months or younger beef, was

viewed as giving up the last defense for its people. The scientific explanation provided by the government has its own complete logic, but that was seen by many people as an act of completely ignoring its own citizens' emotions and daily safety. Moreover, the Lee Administration's irresponsible statements such as, "just don't eat it," caused further rage among the people.

May 2, 2008 was the first day in which people who had been sharing their rage via online took to the streets. A public meeting held on that day, sponsored by online-based websites like "Anti Lee Myung-Bak Cafe," "Mad Cow Dot Net," and others, was not filled with the members of these websites. Rather, the majority of the participants were housewives and female students in school uniforms.<sup>10</sup> This group of people "did not view the threat the way that professionals did" (Douglas 1997: 17). Evidence supporting the differences in the perspectives of groups is also shown in the rhetoric used by the students and housewives. In the May 2<sup>nd</sup> demonstration, there were a variety of picket signs saying "Oppose Mad Cow," "Oppose Mad Education," as well as some about environmental issues. This shows that the group viewed the conflict of the safety issue of US beef import as an opportunity to let out their general anger and frustration over a variety of issues that threatens their lives in general. Unlike professionals, who analyzes the threats based on scientific figures, students and housewives conceived the current threat as a personal and all-inclusive threat. All the issues addressed by the group, such as US beef imports, education, environmental, freedom of speech, standardized thoughts, public security, privatization of health insurance, and other public concerns consolidated into one – a threat to endanger my life.

Such responses from the people are rather common. That is because individual lives do not exist in a form of content section of a book; people's lives cannot be separated into specific sections of the book. The safety issue of personal diet, the pressure of early morning class (the 0<sup>th</sup> hour starting 7 a.m.) at school, and unlimited competition at work are different issues in different stages of life. For an individual who has to live through multiple issues at a

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<sup>10</sup> It's easy to find case studies of other cultures besides Korean culture in which females react more sensitively to issues about life. For example, Chapter 1 of Mies and Shiva (2000) refer to females against nuclear power plants, and Chapter 3 of June C. Nash (2007) talks about how females are more sensitive to the biased reality of the global market.

time, however, life itself is felt under a compact and great threat.

There is also a similarity between the way in which people perceive danger and the nature of the Internet as a form of media. Numerous links to different web pages may not all be connected in reality, but as people gain information from various links and webpages, different stories consolidate into one giant story. It is not abnormal for an Internet user to have a news article about some a Hollywood scandal among numerous articles about scientific information. Despite the disconnection between Hollywood scandals and science issues, an individual might read understand them together as connected stories, however loosely, in daily. This is the reason why there are different varieties of social issues covered in blog spaces, which are meant for sports, entertainment or even humor. An Internet user desires to convey, the frustration he or she is faced on various websites with others and seek out those who are in similar shoes to share the rage. That is one of reasons why on websites various popular websites among teens, there were countless posts and reposts about mad-cow disease even though they, had nothing to do with the purpose of the website. According to Baumeister, Zhang and Vohs, "gossip is useful for conveyance of information to others, for social influence, and for entertainment" in peer group, even "saying that gossip is observational learning of a cultural kind"(Baumeister et al. 2004: 112). Through such acts, Korean teens made the safety issue of US beef import into a public narrative. One female demonstrator who brought her cousins and their friends from Jinju to the demonstration in Seoul stated that she shared a common understanding with the other teens on the Internet:

"Those kids must be frustrated out of their minds. My cousin is a senior in high school, and his generation is the one that has to deal with everything; they just cannot ignore some things and not others like we did. I completely understand why so many teens are frustrated. That is why if one of them hears of an issue, they share it among their friends in different mediums, like blogs and star fan pages." (29 year-old female)

Initially, the US beef import negotiation issue was discussed on personal blogs or Daum Agora, which eventually grew into a frustration over education, the environment, the privatization of the media, and other issues. The fact that

among the first websites to publish advertisements against US beef imports in the Hankyoreh Newspaper (May 17) and Kyunghyang Newspaper (May 19) were not political websites or organizations, but ‘the Soul Dresser,’ a fashion society, demonstrates very well, the public emotions provoked by the US beef import negotiation.

“That day (May 17) was the first time I ever participated in a protest. I went there to get inspired. People like me were told to shut up since the day Lee Myung-Bak was elected as the President, but ever since I heard that there were people meeting up, even little kids. I went to demonstrate out of concerns for their safety and also out of admiration for such courage. I mean the demonstration was not just for being anti-mad cow. You probably know after seeing them, but the kids on the streets are shouting all sorts of things from “What a waste to power Dong-Ah Newspaper [a conservative newspaper supporting the government side],” to “A Just and Through Re-investigation on Samsung Secret Funds.” Those kids know the issues, too. It’s not like they are doing this for fun. And I realized that these poor kids whom my generation forced into this mayhem are the same kids with the right perspectives on social issues. It’s like the old saying; kids who were spanked as a child think more of their parents than the kids who were not.” (47 year-old male)

The May 24<sup>th</sup> demonstration was the first protest that turned into a street march, as the people with candles from Ch’onggye Square began marching through the streets. Of course, during the process, there were heated debates between group who wanted peaceful demonstration and others who argued, “nothing can be achieved if we stay like this.” Finally, a few people went for the streets, and others followed. At dawn, there were physical collisions between demonstrators and the police, and 37 demonstrators were arrested that day. It was the first time when the police force, always outnumbered the demonstrators and threatening them by stomping the ground with their shields shouting “harder,” turned into a violent measure.

Despite the government’s suppression, violently expressed by the police, the demonstration had become more satirical. Demonstrators in ‘Mad Cow’ costumes grew in numbers and picket signs with humorous slogans increased as more people came out to the streets, marching down the 6-lane roads at the center of the capital. People relaxing at bars after work, commuters stuck

in traffic jams caused by the very demonstration, and passers-by all joined the protest.

As the suppression by the police force got harsher and violent, the theme of the demonstration gradually switched from 'beef re-negotiation' to 'Resign, Lee Myung-Bak.' Although there were a few signs saying 'MB [Myung-Bak] OUT'(note: Myung-Bak is likely in reference to the South Korean President, Lee Myung-bak), from the beginning, the theme had got more momentum by the end of May. A special bond of solidarity began to form among the demonstrators, and impromptu slogans were often made by the participants in street.

Demonstrators who occupied the street were people who got over the boundary dividing the pedestrian and car sections set by the society. Societal norms and the hierarchy faded out and the idea of an egalitarian community was emerged; the idea of differentiating between sexes, educational levels, fashion styles, age, and others has become less significant. Sharing the same experience at the same time busted the individual bubble wrapped each demonstrator and compelled them to stand arms in arms, borrow candles and water bottles. Turner, who applied Arnold Van Gennep's idea of the 'rite of passage' to the processes of societal changes, emphasized the notion of liminality,<sup>11</sup> an idea explaining the mental state of people who have shared an experience of deviation and separation. Turner argues that the essence of liminality analyzes culture in many factors and it focuses on recombining those factors by all possible patterns, freely or playfully (Turner 1982: 28-29). Liminality in the candlelight demonstration was that people from different backgrounds gathered in frustration over the safety issue of US beef imports. Therefore, the direction of individual rage is also different. However, the collective experience of violating social rules together in the same physical space has formed a new joy through the process of readjustment and explosion on the issue.

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<sup>11</sup> The dictionary definition of liminality may only limit the meaning of the word to 'limit,' but Turner uses liminality as a word that describes one's state of mind beyond a limit which has metastasized. He implies that the people who shares an experience in a liminal situation experiences a feeling of *communitas*. In the case of the 2008 candlelight demonstration, limits in which such *communitas* was experienced changed frequently. This will be covered in the later part of the paper.

## IV. THE SOCIAL DRAMA OF HUMOR AND WIT

### 1. The Meaning of Smile

Since the beginning of the candlelight demonstrations, the participants drew much attention for their interesting picket signs and attire. Without any conscious and collective intentions, the “candlelight grandmothers,” “candlelight strollers,” “candlelight animals,” “candlelight reserve soldiers,” “candlelight Korean beef advocates,” and even the “candlelight riot police” evolved into a candlelight family. A father dressed as a mad cow walked with a sign around his neck saying “Your Sight Drive Me Crazy” while holding a picket saying “Are You Mad, Mouse [connoting the president]?” His other hand held his son dressed as a mouse with a sign saying “Do I Make You Insane?” Signs reading, “Is the President Recallable?,” “the 1<sup>st</sup> Article of the Constitution [all power comes from people] is even on the College Scholastic Ability Test (note: Korea’s version of the Scholastic Ability Test college entrance exams),” “Let’s Catch the Mice,” “Our House’s Mouse is a Crazy Mouse,” “Please Don’t Do Anything at All” and “This is the First Time I’m Afraid You’ll Keep Your Campaign Promise,” among various others could be seen.

A majority of these pickets were hand-made by the demonstrators at their homes. The demonstrators also put stickers on the riot police vehicles that were surrounding the protesters. Those were citation stickers on the riot police buses reading “Illegal Parking, You Will Be Towed At Your Own Expense,” tickets for ‘Negligence Fines,’ issued in the name of the Korean citizens. In the early morning hours of June 10, they hung a banner from one of the large barricades on Sejong Street, reading “Congratulations on the 2008 Opening of the Myung-Bak Castle Landmark – for Further Information, Dial 112: No Area Code Required.” Citizens would then dial 112 and demand that the police come and remove the illegal structure blocking Sejong Street.

The online humor and parodies were just as prevalent as those off-line. Parody movie posters were a staple, with one stating “Two-Day Chicken Coop Tour,” parodying Cinderella and her pumpkin carriage, and various original songs were also posted. Materials once posted online would be widely

copied and circulated, often new contents and pictures being added during the process. There were also those who would upload files, with writings and pictures they had made in the A4 size. The explosively popular flash animation "MB (Mouse Busters) Project" series, and "The Bone's Ultimatum," which took various scenes from the same titled American film and dubbed over them with Korean, were widely circulated via blogs and Internet cafes.

It was with the emergence of all these varied ideas both on- and off-line, directed towards the armed riot police, that water cannons were first used in an effort to break-up protests on May 31. Special Police Units, armed with clubs and shields, were mobilized against the unarmed peaceful protesters, and the bloody crack-downs began. Injuries among the protestors mounted as the water cannons were directed at their faces, impairing vision and sound. One college student whom I interviewed that September showed me his blog, and had this to say about their experience that day:

"It was the coldest time in my life. Those at the bus were scattering from the stream of the water cannon. One person was hit directly in the head by the water cannon and they lost consciousness in less than two seconds. I was right underneath the bus, so I picked them up and prayed, "Please, just don't let me die." (25 year-old male)

At first, the protestors had retreated from the barricades, and thus the police pressure had clearly achieved its goal. However, that did not break the spirits of all; there were those people who while being hit by the water cannons would yell things such as, "hot water," "soap," and "shampoo." News of this was being broadcasted on cyberspace in real time. People at the site would transmit images of the police violence via their mobile phone or digital cameras. Multitudes of people who had either received text messages or phone calls or been observing the situation from the Internet soon converged on Sejong Street where the protest was happening. Starting early in the morning on Sunday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, people who had heard the news began to take to the streets and fill-up Seoul Square, the square in front of City Hall. Those who had newly arrived at the square took over the positions of the people who had been there over night and were taking a momentary rest. Dozens of individuals with Internet connections used their cameras to transmit

recordings of the police brutality.

On the evening of Thursday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, a 72-hour continuous relay demonstration was announced to begin. As videos and articles depicting female college students being mercilessly stomped on by the combat boots were relayed via the Internet and nearly all of the popular media on that day, the public opinion toward excessive police brutality exploded. Accordingly, the use of clubs and water cannons was momentarily halted for the duration of the 72-hour relay demonstration. Beginning on the afternoon of June 5, people carrying candles filled up the streets from the square in front of City Hall, to Sejong Street, and of course in front of the National Police Agency Headquarters and the Anguk District (안국동). Ridiculing the shields and clubs of the riot police, people carrying magic wands from the Japanese comic “Sailor Moon,” and shields made to resemble those carried by the ‘Gundam’ robots from the comic could be seen.

Speaking freely from podiums, people continuously expressed their thoughts. People would shout things such as “Let’s go to the Blue House” (note: the residence of the President of the ROK), “The candlelit appearance is extremely impressive,” “The season of 20 years ago has come again,” until the veins on their necks stood out. And among all these outburst of frustrations, a story of a college student made people laugh. It was a story about his 27-month-old nephew who lived with him. He was a kind of infant who if you told him not to touch anything dangerous, the minute you took your eyes off of him he would immediately touch it again. The entire family could not do their things at home because they worried if the boy was going to do something dangerous. He ended his story saying that although his nephew’s behavior could be understood with his young age, he could not understand how an adult living in the nicest house in Korea [Blue House] would do the same thing as the people asked not to do again and again.

What makes people not losing their wit and sense of humor even under the violence of the police against them such as verbal insults, taking pictures of the protestors for later criminal evidence, and using the brutal water cannons, clubs, and shields? And what role did this humor serve for the people? To answer these questions, we have to distinguish the different situations in which participating in the candlelight demonstrations found themselves.



Those people participating in the candlelight demonstrations ranged from the owners of expensive buildings in Gangnam to the unemployed; from middle school students who took an express bus up from the countryside on a Saturday afternoon to grey-haired old man who held pickets to protest Yi Moon-Yul [a famous and conservative novelist]. However, all of these people had one thing in common. It was the fact that although these people have voiced their criticisms of the administration and its numerous other policies, the authorities would not listen to them and their voices had been completely ignored. The number of people voicing their opinions is unimportant to the people in power. The more people point out the contradictions that the Lee administration makes and upholds, the more strongly administration and the conservative media which blindly supports it, will distort the facts and ignore those people.<sup>12</sup>

Renato Rosaldo said that in difficult situations, when people are unable to make themselves heard in society or that their voices are completely ignored, humor and wit "becomes a tool for apprehending social incongruities and a weapon for use in social conflict." (Rosaldo 1989: 195). Accordingly, time is important in social change. In this situation, 'timing' is probably better than 'time' because the thing which we call social change begins to start the moment something begins to deviate from what we would predict to normally occur. However, humor and wit too cause pleasant feelings contingent upon timing, based on our counterpart's thoughts or actions. The essence of humor is what we say in that moment departs from our expectations.

"If you look at all of the riot police lined up forming a wall, they fight over there and we fight over here. At that time, you begin to feel the fighting

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<sup>12</sup> Henry Jenkins (2006: 209-219) introducing the campaign "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" after the song title of Gil Scott Heron, spoke of the Internet as an alternative to mainstream media, which seeks to control information and portray political activity in a way that is beneficial to them. Additionally, he predicted that through blogs different opinions would be brought to light and that as they gain authority that even the mainstream media would take notice of these opinions. In Korea, in the summer of 2008, the mainstream media and the Internet alternative, which Jenkins spoke, represented through blogs and cafés were the most brilliant examples of this point. We will have to continue to monitor to see if the next step goes according to Jenkins' predictions.

becomes less intense, because we are thinking, “My brother was drafted in March, do they really want to be there doing this, let us be a little more gentle with each other, and the riot police too are thinking “My brother could be over there protesting.” We need everyone, even the reserve soldiers.” (25 year-old male)

It was not just various costume-play but unconventional usage of behavior, dresses, and language that strength the power of people’s humor and wit. For example, a group of young people wearing reserve soldier uniforms protected the protestor by standing between them and the riot police. Their actions and dress deviated from the situation. The laughter of those and the meaning for those who were there was strengthened through the experience of crossing over normal boundaries at the candlelight protests. The established social system and its mechanisms wanted to do something to put an end to these infringements on order, symbolized by the candlelight, because from the position of the system and authority, the reality was that these gatherings of people crossing boundaries represented serious violation to their status quo. Accordingly, the authority did not hesitate to use violence and other tougher solutions for them. Through merciless material, mental, and violent pressure, the authorities wanted to overcome this crisis by instilling a powerful fear in those who would violate these boundaries. The humor and wit were the methods by which the protestors could use the energy of their solidarity to overcome the atmosphere of fear created by the violent pressure.

By employing wit at this touch-and-go moment when the authorities utilized the police force and violent pressure in an effort to instill fear and destroy the solidarity among the protectors – cheering “sing us a song” to the loudspeaker broadcasts by which the police told them to disperse, and “hot water” to the water cannons - the protestors were able to make a mockery of the mighty government authority. It revealed not only the contradictions created by the governmental organizations and the power structure which supposed to protect its citizens, but also reconfirmed the legitimacy of their protests which reclaim the power of people. Through laughter, they once again gave new strength and vision to their solidarity, and this intuition they gained became a weapon.

Of course, the effectiveness of humor and wit will be faded away if

the demonstration continued a long time or the police violence became a routine because timing is a critical for humor. One male protestor said that the changing atmosphere of the demonstrations was very unfortunate. He suffered the water cannons and the shields on the morning of June 1<sup>st</sup> and carried a 1.5 meter paper shield saying "shields are for blocking, not for hitting." He said that he was too busy to get sick in June and July due to the candlelight protests. When I met him in October, he was still participating in smaller local demonstrations. He said that with spare time at work, he tried to make funny signs to bring joy to those protestors who seem to have lost their smile:

"The funny signs have definitely disappeared. Everyone is serious. Even if it's just me, I'm trying to create an atmosphere that we can smile and protest at the same time, because the police cracking down starts at 10 at night on the weekends, there's no time to do anything. People don't laugh any more and they cannot really laugh in this situation." (31 year-old male)

## 2. Boundary Change and Flexibility

One night I was riding the subway from Seokwan-dong to City Hall around 10 o'clock to meet my students for a reserved performance. I received a text message from one of my friends. 'I got the news: the train was skipping the City Hall station now.' So I had to get off at Chongkak station once before the City Hall. I had to push through in sweat the waves of people who were trying to board the train. I thought to myself, "What kind of situation is this that such many people are trying to get on the train? Well, it was past 11 o'clock so it was almost time for the last train. Having 10 million people in one place is not a easy task after all." After getting out of the underground station, however I was very surprised by what I saw on the ground. There were a lot more people around the station than ones trying to board train in the ground. The area was filled with sounds of people shouting slogans, speeches delivered through loud speakers, and collective singing, all echoing the high-rise concrete forests at the center of Seoul. More impressively, the 8-lane boulevard between the Chongkak station and the Sejong Cultural Center was completely packed with people. Whatever a candles was burned-

out, a protestor nearby would replace it with one that he or she was carrying. Some people were carrying banners and pickets and others were sitting in the middle of the road and chatting with their friends. Other people laid their tired bodies on temporary mats in the middle of the road. Some people brought guitars and sang songs together. People on the street were participating in the demonstration in their own ways – white color wearing suits, some youths wearing hip-hop style clothes, high school students in school uniforms gossiping continuously with their friends, ladies in stylish mini-skirts and high heels, middle aged men wearing straw hats, and even people dressed up as cows and mice. Those people of various ages, dress and lifestyles gathered together in one place at the same time and walked, sang, and shouting on the street as the day approached to the midnight. Passing by the “Myung-Bak Castle,” a police barricade composed of about 60 large shipping containers, to the vicinity of Kyunghyang Newspaper building on the fort, I still saw the street filled with people who did not seem to leave the area soon. Separated from a podium set up in front of the Myung-Bak Castle, a group of people had installed a lot of drums in front of the Dong-A Daily Newspaper building and they were performing with the passers-by. Another group were playing guitars and harmonicas on a mobile stage in front of the main entrance to the Kyobo Bookstore, singing with other groups of citizens. There were groups of people who used to communicate on the Internet, carrying the flags of their online communities and shouting their slogans, with group names such as “Agora,” “Education Solidarity,” and “the Proper Spirit of Our People.” They were marching back and forth between Myung-Bak Castle and the area by the City Hall. There was also a group of middle-aged men and women wearing suits, sitting under a flag that read, “Observers of Violations of the MINBYUN which is the Lawyers for a Democratic Society.” Walking along, I could see girls in “candle-girl” printed red t-shirts, probably college students, were distributing a warm cup of coffee to the protestors. Among friends, couples, and families sitting in the middle of the road, some were having a drink or two. Thinking that it was a good idea to have drinks with my friends later, I headed toward a convenience store by the Sejong Cultural Center. Walking made me realize how wide the Sejong Street intersection was, which you did not feel when you drove a car. After a not so short walk I arrived at a convenience store across the street, but I was told

that all beer and soju was already sold out and there would not be restocked tonight because the delivery truck could not access to the store. Habitually I took my cell phone and found out there were several calls I missed due to a loud and noisy environment. Concerning about how to find my friends the crowd, I called one of them who arranged the appointment. After many rings, he finally picked up his phone. He said that they were all taking a break on a tiny grass patch between the Myung-Bak Castle and the Kyobo Bookstore. While walking meet my friends in a hurry, I ran into the leader of a music band that performed on the May 17<sup>th</sup> Candlelit Cultural Event. As we were exchanging a greeting, my friends luckily spot me amongst the crowd and they came over. How released I was to see them! That was how the night of June 10<sup>th</sup> started for me.

The narrative above, reconstructed from thoughts and feelings recorded in my notebook between June 10<sup>th</sup> and June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008, my first impression on that night. It reminded me of something that Turner said; "during social dramas, a group's emotional climate is full of thunder and lightning and choppy air currents." From Chongkak to Sejong Street, and all the way to Seoul City Hall, the activities of all the people who had filled the streets, holding candles and marching, singing and yelling had really reversed the convention about streets. This infringement could just be a momentary desire, or it could be "a political act designed to challenge the extant power structure" (Turner 1982: 10). It does not matter whether it was, as Turner said, a calculated action or totally uncalculated rage. The important fact is the individual motive of tens of thousands of people, and that they actively chose to gather in one place and at one time. The Korean-American Beef Agreement was one important cause among many, but from the first demonstration on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, the pickets carried by the participants indicated their different problems based on their individual thoughts and the paths of their lives. In the middle of those differences, they all gathered in public and carried out activities opposing the established society's legal system together. They believed that they shared some kinds of collective perspective made in the course of these individual actions. One of the important things to emerge from the 2008 candlelight demonstrations was that through the medium of the Internet, not only people who were there at the site of the protest, but also people in different regions and even those overseas could feel that they did

experience the protests in real-time. When grading my students' final papers in June, I could feel like being at Kwanghwamun where the protest happened through Internet broadcasts and the text messages from my co-workers, friends and colleagues. Through the Internet, an emotional community was created which could not be explained by the conventional theories.

The meaning of the candlelight demonstrations was not about 'changing the system'. On the contrary, it was in reaction to how weak and easily the divisions and boundaries that people had believed in could be changed. Many people were indignant upon seeing the Internet broadcast of the police pulling the hair of a woman in a wheelchair who had come to the candlelight demonstrations. However, it soon came to light that that woman was a fervent follower of a female leader in the conservative political party, and that she used to participate in many conservative rallies along with that leader. This incident made both those who claimed left-wing conspiracy on the candlelight demonstrations and those who raised their candles saying they could not live with 'conservative boneheads' under the same sky to scratch their head. It is in part because her participating in the demonstration and protesting behavior against the police authority cannot be explained by any conventional views of dividing people into groups. The woman's participation cannot be simplified either as a betrayal of the conservatives or, a cooperation with the progressive agenda. Even at that brutal moment, she had not given up the trust in the political leader she supported. Like other participants, she was acting out of concerns on various the social crisis. The candlelight demonstration, a social drama, provided a stage in which that woman could act crossing the established sociopolitical borders and measuring sticks. It opened the possibility that, "yesterday's luminal becomes today's stabilized, today's periphery becomes tomorrow's center" (Turner 1974: 16).

It is social drama and its power that make people able to ignore and change the borders dividing the left-wing and right-wing or good and evil. Any groups or individuals who opposed to each other before the social drama can transform to take the same position through social drama or vice versa. This cannot be easily understood in an ordinary life in which life patterns are well regulated. However, social drama, a special situation with elevated emotions, can reveal the divisions among individuals and systems in an extreme fashion or negate and transform them with absolute easy.

"In particular, the dramatic episodes where actors make strategic attempts to change definitions of the situation." And the boundary [frame] becomes very soft and weaving. "Frame contestation and frame alignment are a key mechanism driving the progression of the situational drama" (McFarland 2004: 1250).

Let's go back to the early morning of June 11. Even though it was past the midnight, it did not seem that the numbers of people gathered at Sejong Street had gone down. At about 1 o'clock in the morning, people began passing the styrofoam boxes in the square of the City Hall over each other's heads and stacked them in front of the Myung-Bak Castle in an orderly fashion. The styrofoam wall was almost as tall as the barriers themselves, which were over five meters height. Those who had climbed onto a platform on top of the styrofoam wall did not climb over the Myung-Bak Castle not because they could not, but because they asserted that they had already won. At this point the gathered people started to become restless. Lots of shouts such as, "Let's go over," "Put a flag on top of the containers," "It's dangerous so let's just build one that's the same height," "We have to go forward non-violently," "Going over (the containers) is dangerous," could be heard. A promoter with a microphone and a human rights organization repeatedly asserted that climbing-over the barricade is not only dangerous, but also endanger their non-violence stance. Those who opposed burst out with profanity and abusive language here and there in the crowd. One could also hear voices shouting against the use of profanity in public. One young woman standing in front of me even started to cry because of the shouts and profanity. In the midst of all of this internal strife, at about 3 am, one man just barely managed to climb on top of the oil-covered container barricade. In one moment, people on either side of the barricade broke out in an uproar. Applause broke out amongst the crowd, and there was a jumble of people either cheering him, or shouting that it was dangerous so he should get down. Even on the backside of the container where the riot police were waiting, you could hear people shout "wake up" and the sound of the hustling movement. The tiresome quarreling had started at about 1 a.m. and found a temporary agreement of climbing on top of the container without going over it. Everyone said that the climax of that day's demonstrations was when dozens of people climbed to the top of the Myung-Bak Castle and were waving their flags. Of course, after that

happened, the police began to physically break up the crowd.

The boundaries between those with different perspectives can break apart and come back together at any time. This process is not resolved by the establishment's system or discipline, but rather by the motivation created by the movement's internal energy. Boundaries can become reorganized at any time. The mobility of boundaries has started to become even more varied, with foreigners living in Korea participating in the demonstrations, as the danger of the food safety is one that they too will have to face. One foreign female, who appeared on a panel on a public television broadcast, became a topic of conversation as she participated in the protests with her friends. At that time, you could meet Japanese students who said they planned on staying for a year and studying Korean.

"My friends who are in Japan keep talking about mad-cow disease, and telling me to come back to Japan, and I am just very upset [with the current issue in Korea]. My friend's family is also staying and we went out to the candlelight demonstrations together. We were hit by the water cannons [by the police], and it really hurt." (21 year-old male, Japanese international student)

Everyday until daybreak, there were groups that were raising their voices shouting, "Let's go to the Blue House." The most fervent among them was a group I was introduced to, which was an association formed among like-minded persons who wanted to properly fix the spirit of their people. There were about five or six of them, and they would take turns shouting their slogans, such as "Lee Myung-Bak, out! Pak Kun-Hye, out! Pak Jung-Hee, out! (they alternated between Park Jung-Hee, and his Japanese name Takaki Masao), Chosun Daily, out!," until their sounds were hoarse, all while holding their Internet group's flag. A special situation had arisen in which foreign residents in Korea including the Japanese would participate in the candlelight demonstrations together with those Koreans insisting that the Korea spirit had lost its way and needed to be revived.

The energy of social dramas is as powerful as to the extent in which the borders dividing people are totally obscured. However, the energy resulted from the separation from the normalcy cannot continue forever when the participants return to their daily life. The candlelight demonstrations were



naturally changed into a different form.

### 3. The Giving Birth of Order

If anyone stayed at the site of the candlelight demonstration until the early hours of the morning, one would be the recipient of a roll of *kimbab* or a cup of hot coffee, an act which has come to be called "*Kimbab* Tribute." "Da-In's Father," a candlelight tea room owner who decided to provide a free cup of coffee to individuals at his establishment, was among those who participated in the 'Occupy KBS Candlelight Gathering'. There always were serious and minor differences of opinion among the gatherings' participants. However, in judging the situation that had evolved from the experience of almost two months of a series of protests, a means of cooperation started to take hold through a set of one principles and order. The fact that order, a long-term war mentality, and the creation of fixed apparatuses within the protest lines began to emerge from the candlelight demonstrations, which became a dynamic force infringing upon and causing discord amongst established institutions, showed that the candlelight demonstrations were moving towards a new aspect, a different step re-uniting (the demonstrations) with normal existence.

There are those who say that the candlelight demonstrations were unable to obtain visible, positive results, and that compared to the amount of effort that all of the people put into it, nothing has changed. However, science in which everything is as an absolute value or principle uses a completely different basis for each person. It is important that the people who identified themselves as a conservative or a progressive created what we call boundaries, but at the same time they were able to raise the agreed voice at the demonstrations and meet each other in person. In an experience like this, the body remembers the fact that the boundaries which divide society are in fact very vague and that depending on the situation, you could even meet people who were located on an extreme political opposition like the difference was nothing, and switch your positions with them. The body's memories can be conscious, but it is definitely possible that things remain among the unconscious.

Of course, not everyone stood on the side of the candlelight demonstrations. There were counter-demonstrations and self-proclaimed conservatives who

opposed the demonstrations. However, just as the candlelight demonstrations had many voices, you cannot summarize those who opposed them all as one voice. On the contrary, the fact that conservative media and organizations' positions went from one extreme to another in a matter of months was confirmed by netizens.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, we also saw conservative organizations, who opposed the candlelight demonstrations, coming out and confronting the participants of the demonstrations.<sup>14</sup>

These experiences show us that one cannot conclude that there is only one truth between the conservatives and the progressives, or between science and conventional wisdom. Through the candlelight demonstrations the fact became dramatically known that the borders, which, in normal conditions carefully divide completely different political values and thoughts, are, in reality, all intertwined. Regarding this type of liminality exist for, Turner said, "chaos into cosmos, or disorder into order, than the creative inter-human or trans-human satisfaction and achievements" (Turner 1982: 46). The candlelight demonstrations were incapable of achieving material breakthroughs or results and different from that assertion. However, we can look at the entirety of this experience also considered the process through. Turner (1974) regarded it as the "serious" genres of symbolic action among people who engage in various competitive relationships while living in the midst of an imperfect social, political, and religious system. It is worth that Turner emphasized social drama is not cyclical repetitive view of the human historical process. Many kinds of sequences of social action may be generated but which further specify what sequences must be excluded (Turner 1974:

<sup>13</sup> Netizens pointed out that the same news organization featured articles both confirming and denying the danger surrounding the aforementioned MM gene.

<sup>14</sup> On June 5th, members of the "Korean Special Forces Association" placed a plaque in Seoul Square, commemorating those who had died while conducting special secret missions against North Korea. A netizen named Professor Jin Jung-gwan wrote an article, "The North Korean Operations Participants' Association's Gag-show" (<http://www.cbs.co.kr/nocut/show.asp?idx=854555>), regarding the day events and plaque. The Korean Special Forces Association filed a civil lawsuit claiming that his article had perverted the memory of Korea's fallen war heroes. For more information about this, refer to "Asia Economy" article, "Special Forces Associations' 100 Million Won Civil Lawsuit Against Professor Jin Jung-gwan" (<http://www.asiaeconomy.co.kr/uhtml/read.php?idxno=2008081416534320298>)

15-17). So we can say each particular case of social drama has its own unique causes and inspirations.

Of course it is dangerous to understand the liminality experienced during the candlelight demonstrations as a homogenous experience. It is also dangerous to contrast the summer of 2008 for Korean people to some historical fact or substituting the 2008 experience in some theoretical paradigm to conclude the processes, as an unimportant factor is an act of taxidermy, stuffing the experiences of people as if they were all experimental specimens. Criticizing the universality of something in terms of its procedure and the universal perspective of reality produces a very different depth of analysis. In the latter case, the candlelight demonstration appears as an appropriate reaction, which would define the candlelight demonstration as a usual phenomenon like a seasonal flu. However, in the earlier case, more value is put on the individual experiences of the candlelight demonstration than the result of the demonstration. People who participate in the candlelight demonstration physically experienced the explosion of the individual frustration of others on the Internet and at the actual location. What is important is that people with different thoughts and backgrounds shared those experiences in the midst of serious anxiety. This experience was very meaningful, even after the demonstrators cleared the square. This is discussed in the next chapter.

## V. SOCIAL DRAMA, THE NEXT SCENE

### 1. Experience of Uncertainty

The basic social drama model is full of conflicts and controversies. Sociocultural system is not as harmonious as logical system. Nevertheless, it is not to be mistaken that structural imbalance or norms are embedded in the sociocultural system. The confrontation of change and social norms need not be defined with objective language. That exists between all sort of uncertainty and certainty. What I mean by uncertainty is the subjunctive mood. That

is, something that may exist, may have existed, or will exist.<sup>15</sup> Candlelight represents a lump of frustrated energy, not a solution to some problem. Therefore, it bears not a conclusive property in which the beginning and an end can be determined.

If one fails to understand the social drama-like characteristics of the candlelight demonstration, he may mistakenly conclude that candlelight demonstrations have come to an end when weekend demonstrations become less exciting or when there are less people gathered in Seoul Square. The fact that there are divided opinions and analysis after the candlelight has left the square signifies that the state of candle is at excess, explosion, anxiety, vain and even absence. Candlelight can be portrayed as an experience of possibility, a hidden potential. The candlelight demonstrations, especially, from the beginning, were organized with the principles of hypertextual logical-joints known as the Internet and the energy of chaos.

Hence, it is important to realize that Korean society has experienced an aura of uncertainty that it has never experienced before, as Korean people expressed the boundaries and conflicts within the society not only online but also off-line, overcoming the limits of time and space. The candlelight demonstration was a lesson for all, regardless of whether one participated, ignored or opposed it. It is proper to say that the candlelight demonstrations were dramatic opportunity that vividly showed the confrontation, accommodation and strengthening of individual ideas developed out of concerns for survival and maintenance of place. Other people's thoughts and opinions which were often ignored in the daily lives were dramatically displayed via candlelight to form ultimately a collective struggle and solidarity. The experience in which the sociopolitical device, considered to protecting citizens, turns its back on them is an experience that shows how dangerous and incomplete the society in which we live. When we doubted the direction of the existing system and protested against it, we clearly felt the suppression in forms of violence. The established system such as political organizations and the powerful is trying to crush new attempts to bring about changes upon the society by squeezing them into a legal frame of the system

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<sup>15</sup> For a better understanding of this, refer to Chapter 2 of Turner's book (1982: 61-88).

and covering it.<sup>16</sup>

Because the important role of the social drama is the role of dramatically experiencing the structural imbalance between the society and the hidden confrontations, the violent form of imbalance and confrontation arouse public conscience. Of course, saying that everyone's conscious is awakened in the same image is also a lie. However, there are people who have experienced such awakening, finding structural imbalance and confrontations in different situations. If there are numerous results of awakening, there is a good chance that at least a few will be awaken. The fact that one can expect the potential making of such people represents the first footstep in understanding the scattered candlelight that once united in the square.

## 2. From the Square to the Neighborhoods

On June 8, the day in which the 72-hour Seoul Square demonstration was at its peak, a new Internet webpage called "Gathering of Promoting the Summoning of Citizens (<http://cafe.daum.net/sowhanje>)" was created. The objective of this website was to pass a legislation that allows people to recall and resign the lawmakers who make incorrect choices even during the parliament is in session. The formation of this gathering shows that people have realized that the rage of the candlelight demonstration must turn to each neighborhood. Now, the people sought to make a measure in which they could continuously watch and be aware of social issues by bringing the candlelight back home.

Since May, candlelight demonstrations arose nationally, from every corner of Korea. The tide of the candlelight spread not only in the major cities of Busan, Gwangju, Daejeon, Daegu, Suwon, but also throughout medium-size cities of Bucheon, Ansan, Gwangmyeong, Goyang, Paju. Those demonstrations were not that large in its scale at the beginning. Unlike the Seoul demonstration, the response of the police in those regions was strictly restricted to negligence. One college student who participated in one of them in late May described how null the Busan demonstration was.

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<sup>16</sup> For a better understanding of this, refer to Chapter 2 of Turner's book (1974: 60-97), which reveals the conflict between Henry II of England and Thomas Becket.

“I thought there were more than a thousand people at the demonstration, but there were only four cops. Cops behaved like mad men on April 2008 during the general elections period, but not this time. It seemed like there were so many of them out in Seoul, but here, all they did was hanging a single string of yellow tape in front of us and told us, ‘Do not cross this line.’ That made me to run out of steam. It almost felt like being discriminated [by the government concerning more about the Capital].” (24 year-old male)

At first, it was true that the candlelight demonstrations seemed to be incapable of going beyond the vicinity of Seoul. Therefore, there were a lot of people who made a weekend trip to Seoul to participate in demonstrations. When the demonstrations were extended and lasted for a long period of time, people actively sought to discuss the daily hardship at the demonstrations, which eventually scattered the candles to each neighborhood. In mid-July, violent suppression and restrictions made the mood in Seoul to die down as well.

The reason why regional candlelight demonstrations gained so much support stemmed from the unexpressed rage and helplessness of the demonstrators who eventually returned to their daily lives. That rage became clearer and sharper in different regions than they were at Seoul. Furthermore, people could no longer endure the violence and the negligence engaged by the government. Near the Gangnam station in Seoul, where many offices are clustered, there were small-scale demonstrations at 7:00 p.m. almost everyday.

“I am not feeling well, and you cannot even get to the City Hall because of the barricades that the cops put up. I live in Gwacheon, and this was the closest place from home that I found on the Internet where they are having demonstrations, so I came here for a little bit in the evening with my picket sign.” (30 year-old women)

“This is my first time too, and I do not really know politics, but this is just insane. I have never participated in demonstrations before, but I cannot endure it anymore, I am really pissed. But since I am tired after work and Ch’eonkye Square is too far away, I came to the closest place at least to talk about the issue [with other people].” (Female in her 20’s)

The Internet providing information about regional candlelight demonstrations

had varieties of functions; online gatherings of the countless regional candlelight demonstrations were organized and meetings were formed to inform the Korean candlelight demonstrations to the international community by translating news articles (<http://www.globalcandles.org>). In addition, reference links dedicated to sharing designs of picket signs, logos, and other publications were created as well. People uploaded their own designs and collected designs and ideas scattered around the country. Some online archives even received public spotlight for sharing effective designs. Many people voluntarily spent their own money to develop designs and distribute the protest pamphlets and flyers on the street. The webmaster of many online websites opened supporting bank accounts and used the collected fund to make and send a large volume of pockets and publications to the local members of the candlelight demonstration.

### **3. Solidarity Found in the Neighborhood: Meaning of the Space Next to Me**

The "Gathering for Promoting the Summoning of Citizens" Internet website shared information of individuals who wanted to bring candlelight demonstrations to their neighborhoods. In this website, there were varieties of information and people sharing advices, designs, funding ideas, and manpower.

Stories shared on the website included a wide-range of stories from physical conflicts with the police to the sharing of know-hows on how not to be arrested. Most of the regional candlelight demonstrations were held around major subway stations. Numerous methods of achieving solidarity were developed and the experienced demonstrators from one region helped pave the way for new demonstrations in other regions. There were many cases of people joining the cause after reading epilogues of demonstrations.

A male who had been attending the Seoul Square candlelight demonstration since the early stages of the demonstration also attended the Sungbuk-Gu regional candlelight demonstrations. He found a greater importance and meaning in the regional candlelight demonstrations; it had been more active off-line than online.

“I’ve worked for an Internet website before, so I try not to bother with the online debates. I got upset just by hearing the name of the website. It is exploitation I tell you, exploitation! One day when I was getting off work, I saw a candle near my neighborhood (Near Sungshin Women’s University). I did not know how it got there since I tried staying off of the Internet as much as I can. Well, I went to go introduce myself and immediately joined forces. I regret not participating earlier even though it was so close to me. I was also a bit ashamed because I have been telling myself that I’m an anarchist for some time now. After I joined the regional demonstration, I began to be more hopeful. Beef is what we eat, so it is very important, same as important problem of my town where I live also. To tell you the truth, when I first visited them, they asked me what my online ID was, they think I am the one of the website member in regional candlelight demonstrations. But what is the importance of that? What is important is that we experienced the water cannon shots together and...” (31 year-old Male)

The regional demonstration that the man above participated into was said to have received a lot of help from the organizers of the Songpa-Gu region demonstrators. This 31 year-old man also had experiences with regional demonstrations near his work. He said that the few months of participating in demonstrations had been meaningful to him because it gave him an opportunity to think differently than the square demonstrations. At the square, he was fighting against the Vietnam War veterans, particularly the victims of the Agent Orange (defoliant), who were against the demonstration. Those veterans could have been his next-door neighbors back in the neighborhood. Personally, I also encountered many angry people at the demonstration shouting ‘commie’ to the demonstrators. However, trying to resolve regional demonstrations via violence or neglect cannot be a solution because regardless of whether one supports or opposes the demonstration, they are all neighbors. It is important that people communicate verbally in forming solidarity through the idea of membership in a specific community. This is not much different from the issue of dividing sides with scientific data, which was discussed in the first chapter. If the experiences from the square meant that the liberal and conservative division was arbitrary, the regional actions are experiences in which people can realize that they are neighbors and affirm the membership in the community.



## VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The creative energy from the candlelight demonstration was formed outside of the existing social frame. It was a chaotic vibe. Of course the boundary of chaos is very mobile and there are always situations of conflict and adjustment within that chaos. The adjustment process within is a work of violating, neglecting and even rejecting the existing society's laws, idea, science and other boundaries. People's experiences of the size of power in the midst of such an adjustment are extremely large. They are large enough to ignore individual contexts and even shake the very nature of it. Therefore, this experience becomes an opportunity to imagine a different order. The potential means not an immediate solution, but rather, planting a seed for future. The energy experienced from the square is embedded in the body. That experiences and memories of the Candlelight protests become the leading factor of carrying on regional demonstrations later. This is why I think the regional demonstrations deserve far more attention than the square candlelight demonstrations of May, June and July. I have decided to use the drama theory because this experience of uncertainty speaks of power and the value of it.

The participants of the social drama readjusted the experience from the square in their own contexts; some joined an array of citizen campaign organizations, some shared friendships with regional demonstrators around subway stations, and some just simply returned to their ordinary lives. However, "formulating the opinions or beliefs of oneself in any form not only means that he is not aware of the future changes, but also that itself is a small change already" (Lummis 2002: 148). Experiences from the candlelight demonstrations will transform into an act of direct expression of individual opinions on life – ultimately an act of power politics. Carter (2005) said through direct action, one may learn the political skills needed for making decisions, give speeches among people, handle the press, and lobby the decision makers (Carter 2005: 240-241). However, what is more important is that all of the opinions of the people from the square and the Internet, and those of people both supporting and opposing the demonstration, are not absolute truths. Rather, they are all part of the power process that must be

confronted and adjusted continuously. The social boundary created at the candlelight demonstration is also not so determined, and it often changes. With a blink of an eye, the same boundary used to united people can be used to divide them.

Therefore, I worry about the realistic meanings of my surroundings. Despite being able to understand each other's context of life as neighbors, there are clear lines of differences between each individual, and those differences are not something that is at fault, but, they are a motivating factor that makes rooms for debate in communal interests through adjustment and solidarity. If politics is simply a variety of conflicts and solidarity surrounding a daily decision, politics is not meant only for the existing politicians, but is a duty for every human being. Candlelight demonstrations have made room for political awareness to squeeze in between people who have been pressured by the logic of capitalistic competition. Candlelight, which penetrated through the neighborhoods of Korea, reminds us the meaning and the importance of politics. Of course, putting such meaning and importance into practice is a wholly different story, as social drama is always crude and its excitement can often evaporate quickly. However, the clues of awakening and the evidences of it remain in our body, which also remembers the solidarity, confrontation, and violence from the scene. For the summer of 2008, the social drama of Chëonkye Square passes through the open conclusion of the closing ground.

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